

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 89
By Cooper B

A RESOLUTION to establish a joint committee to examine possible changes to the State's drug policy and to identify the expenditures made on behalf of the war on drugs.

WHEREAS, the war on drugs has failed; every community in this State contends with the harmful effects of drug misuse and its related problems and while states have continually increased their expenditures to wage the war on drugs, policies which rely heavily on arrest and incarceration have proven costly and ineffective and addressing these issues; and

WHEREAS, the war on drugs perpetuates mandatory minimums, felony disenfranchisement, disproportionate over-incarceration, poor access to healthcare, under-funded public education, and widespread unemployment; and

WHEREAS, paying for the war on drugs means spending limited tax dollars on failed policies instead of proven solutions; Americans spend approximately \$140 billion annually on prisons and jails and \$24 billion each year to house over 1.2 million non-violent offenders, and some states spend more on their prison systems than on education; and

WHEREAS, harm reduction strategies, including access to affordable, community-based drug treatment, along with educational and economic opportunities, have shown to be successful and reducing the harms of drug misuse, yet more than half of those individuals in need of drug treatment do not have access to such drug treatment; and

WHEREAS, the common goal of this body is to advocate those policies which increase the health and welfare of the communities of this State; and

WHEREAS, taking steps to reduce the incarceration of non-violent offenders and increasing the availability of treatment is not only fiscally responsible but is also a sound public policy which is being implemented in other states throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, it is this body's firm belief that non-violent substance abusers are not menaces to our communities but rather a troubled, yet integral, part of the community in need of being reclaimed; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that there is hereby created a special joint committee to study the efficacy making certain changes to the State's drug policy, including repealing mandatory sentences, diverting non-violent drug offenders out of prison and into community-based treatment programs, and stopping the flow of people needing treatment or transitional services due to recidivation based on positive urine tests, to identify and outline quantifiable goals which encompass reducing the effects of drug abuse, addiction, and unjust drug policies while increasing public safety, and to identify the total expenditures by this State on behalf of the war on drugs and compare them to the expenditures on behalf of public education and health services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee shall consist of three (3) members of the House of Representatives and three (3) members of the Senate, to be appointed by the respective speakers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all appropriate state agencies shall provide assistance to the special joint committee upon request of the chair.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all legislative members of the special joint committee who are duly elected members of the General Assembly shall remain members of such committee until the committee reports its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall be convened by the member with the most years of continuous service in the General Assembly; and at its first meeting shall elect a chair, vice-chair, and such other officers the committee deems necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special committee shall timely report its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation or interim reports, to the One Hundred Fourth General Assembly, at which time the committee shall cease to exist.

